



Agenda item 5.6
For information

Council

CNL(01)38

***Information on the Surface Tuna Fisheries Operating in European
Waters and International Waters***

(Tabled by the EU)

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At last year's Council meeting the Representative of the US referred to reports of by-catch of Atlantic salmon in a troll fishery for Albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*) off the west coast of Ireland. Subsequently the US provided information from an observer who worked for a private company that was providing fishery observer coverage for the Spanish Albacore fishery off Ireland in 1997 or 1998. The observer reported that the company had observers on 4 of the 40-45 vessels that participated in the fishery that year. The information suggested that all four of the observers witnessed a by-catch of Atlantic salmon. The reported salmon catches were not large relative to the Albacore catch, but appeared to be a regular occurrence in the fishery.

The Representative of the EU agreed to try to obtain information for the Eighteenth Annual Meeting.

Several sources of information on the possible coincidence of tuna catches and salmon by-catch in European waters were examined for this review.

1. ICCAT Documentation

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas is an inter-governmental fishery organization responsible for the conservation of tunas and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and its adjacent seas. The Commission:

- compiles fishery statistics from its members and from all entities fishing for these species in the Atlantic Ocean,
- coordinates research, including stock assessment, on behalf of its members,
- develops scientific-based management advice,
- provides a mechanism for contracting parties to agree on management measures, and
- produces relevant publications.

ICCAT have reported on the by-catch of other fish species on a number of occasions since 1990 (ICCAT SCRS/93/10 and SCRS/99/20) with more recent reports coming through the ICCAT sub-committee on by-catch. Figure 1 shows the approximate area of the summer surface fisheries in European waters where the principal harvest is Albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*). Despite extensive reporting of a wide range of fish species in both of the reports cited above, Atlantic salmon have not been recorded in by-catches.

2. ICES Information

At its 1993 Annual Science Meeting, Goujon, Antoine and Collet (1993) presented information on by-catches of other fish species in observed landings of Albacore tuna by the French driftnet fleet (Figure 1). These authors reported no Atlantic salmon by-catch in a total catch of 242,000 tuna.

3. Information from Irish Observers

In 1992, no Atlantic salmon were recorded by an Irish observer over a 10 day fishing period which resulted in over 8,000 tuna being caught in the area indicated in Figure 1, although the mesh sizes and deployment of the drift nets used by the tuna fisheries were similar to those which are used in the Irish coastal salmon fishery.

A report to the Commission of the European Communities (EU Contract No. 98/010) on diversification trials with alternative tuna fishing techniques also reported on the by-catch during these trials. Again, no Atlantic salmon were reported.

Personal communications with other Irish tuna fishery observers and fleet assessment technicians from 1993 to the present clearly indicate that Atlantic salmon are not reported in these fisheries as by-catch.

4. Discussion

It has not been possible to verify the accounts of a by-catch of Atlantic salmon in Spanish troll fisheries for Albacore tuna from official sources. The surface fisheries (troll, bait-boat, driftnet and pair pelagic trawl) for Albacore tuna in European and international waters are carried out some distance from the coast and it is unlikely (as the available evidence suggests) that they pose a significant threat to salmon stocks. Considering the location of these fisheries the most likely stocks affected would be those returning to rivers in France, Spain and Portugal. However, official sources of information do not contain information suggesting that salmon are taken as a by-catch by these fisheries. The situation will be reviewed on an on-going basis and can be reported to the Council if contradictory information is received in the future.

5. References




Anon. (2000) – Diversification trials with alternative tuna fishing technique including the use of remote sensing technology. EU Contract No. 98/010. Commission for the European Communities.

Goujon M., Antoine L. and Collet A. (1993). Incidental catches of cetaceans by the French Albacore tuna driftnet fishery – Preliminary results. ICES N:13 Ref:H, ICES Statutory Meeting 1993.

ICCAT SCRS/93/10 Summary of the survey of tuna fisheries by-catches, 1993. International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, Madrid, Spain.

ICCAT SCRS/99/20 Report of the inter-sessional meeting of the ICCAT sub-committee on by-catch. International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, Madrid, Spain.

Figure 1 Approximate areas of summer surface fishing grounds in the Bay of Biscay and its adjacent waters, by type of surface fishery (source ICCAT SCRS/94/16).

 = Spanish baitboat and troll fishery ,
  = French, UK and Irish driftnet fishery
 = French and Irish midwater pelagic trawl fishery

